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**Pear Tree**  
Susan M. Tiberghien

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**Susan M. Tiberghien**

PEAR TREE

Outside my window, in the middle of our front yard, leans a small pear tree. The trunk is dark gray. It puts out blossoms, skimpy ones on skinny branches. Planted many years ago, it grew crooked even with its wooden tutor. I wanted it out of sight, and when I finally pulled away the tutor, I hoped it would fall over in the next storm, flapping its anorexic branches in adieu.

My husband's mother, until a few years ago, stood straight and strong in her large family. We were close to one hundred descendants at her eightieth birthday. She wore lavender, a soft full skirt, circling to the music of a waltz. Today, stricken with Alzheimer's disease, she sits strapped to a wheelchair, a woolen scarf tight across her chest. Her face is dazed in disbelief. Her eyes are dark gray circles. I look for light in them and find only darkness. Her fingers try to fasten the last button on her sweater.

Today, a postcard of Van Gogh's painting, *Pear Tree in Bloom*, arrived. Its dark gray trunk is twisted, the branches ugly and crippled. But in the gnarled fists, there are blobs of color, mandalas of white blossoms, surrounded with a few green leaves.